

Remarks

The Applicants have amended Claims 29 and 40 to recite that the fiber length is "2 cm to 10 cm." Support may be found throughout the Applicants Specification such as in paragraph [0066] on page 28.

Claims 29, 39 and 40 have been amended to remove the "substantially free of the bundles of ultra-fine fibers" language.

Claim 30 has been cancelled.

Claim 36 has been amended to recite that the treatment for forming ultra-fine fibers is performed after performing needle punching "of the composite fibers."

Claim 39 has been amended to recite that the non-woven fabric is a dyed non-woven fabric. This is similar to the language of Claim 40.

Claim 32 has been amended to recite that the ultra-fine fibers are made of a non-elastic polymer.

Claim 46 has been cancelled. Claim 47 has been amended to recite that the artificial leather according to Claim 40 contains fine particles.

Entry of the above amendments and cancellation into the official file is respectfully requested.

Claim 42 stands objected to as being of improper dependent form. As noted above, the Applicants have amended Claim 42 to recite that the ultra-fine fibers are made of a non-elastic polymer. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 29-30, 32-40 and 42-48 stand rejected under 35 USC §112 for failing to comply with the written description requirement. The Applications note with appreciation the Examiner's comments with respect to the language staying "substantially free of bundles of ultra-fine fibers." The Applicants respectfully submit that one skilled in the art would easily understand that this is the intended meaning of the entirety of the Applicants' Specification. Thus, ample support may be found throughout the Applicants' Specification. Nonetheless, the Applicants have removed that language, thereby rendering the rejection moot. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 36 stands rejected under 35 USC §112 as being indefinite. The Applicants have accordingly amended Claim 36 to recite that the treatment for forming ultrafine fibers is performed after performing needle punching of the composite fibers. Withdrawal of the

rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 29, 32, 39, 40 and 44-46 stand rejected under 35 USC §102 as being anticipated by Tadokoro. The Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's detailed comments hypothetically applying Tadokoro against those claims. The Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Tadokoro fails to implicitly or explicitly disclose all of the subject matter therein.

For example, Claims 29 and 40 recite that the fiber length is 2 cm to 10 cm. This is different from Tadokoro which does not provide a range of fiber lengths, but only multiple examples of fiber lengths which are 7.5 mm, 15 mm, 6 mm and 3 mm as set forth in various of the examples. At most, those fiber lengths are 1.5 cm. Thus, they are outside of the Applicants' claimed range. The Applicants have discovered that having the fiber length in their claimed range provides surprisingly improved physical properties such as those described in paragraph [0030] of the Applicants' Specification. Also, the Applicants note that the non-woven fabric of Tadokoro is prepared by a so-called "wet-laid" process. Fibers of the short lengths of Tadokoro are particularly suitable for such a wet-laid process. However, the Applicants' fibers of a length of 2 cm to 10 cm are too long for that process and are not suitable. Thus, not only are the Applicants' claimed non-woven fabric in Claim 29 and artificial leather sheet as recited in Claim 40 novel over Tadokoro, but they are also non-obvious over Tadokoro. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested with respect to Claims 29, 32, 40 and 44-46.

The Applicants respectfully submit that Tadokoro is also inapplicable to Claims 39, 40 and 44-46 inasmuch as the Applicants specifically claim "an artificial leather sheet." Tadokoro does not disclose an artificial leather sheet. Instead, Tadokoro is directed to utterly different subject matter which is a non-woven fabric for a battery separator. There is no implicit and no explicit disclosure of artificial leather sheets in Tadokoro. Thus, Claims 39, 40 and 44-46 are novel over Tadokoro.

Claim 39 is also not anticipated by Tadokoro because Claim 39 recites a "dyed" non-woven fabric. Because the non-woven fabrics of Tadokoro are battery separators, they contain no dye. Therefore, Tadokoro is inapplicable to Claim 39. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 30 stands rejected under 35 USC §103 over Tadokoro. The Applicants respectfully submit that this rejection is moot in view of the cancellation of Claim 30.

Claims 47-48 stand rejected under 35 USC §103 over the hypothetical combination of Katayama with Tadokoro. The Applicants acknowledge the Examiners' detailed comments hypothetically applying that combination again to those claims. The Applicants nonetheless respectfully submit that Katayama failed to cure the deficiency set forth above with respect to Tadokoro. Thus, even if one skilled in the art were to import the features of Katayama into Tadokoro, the resulting structures would still be different from the underlying subject matter of Claim 40. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In light of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that the entire application is now in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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